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The following miscellaneous articles are a selection of pieces that were accepted in both the print realm and the internet. I have not included two short stories, Ridicule's Story and The Coffee Shop, or a poem, Creation Chronicle, as they have been republished in Heritage Restored. If your particular publication requires a copy of these or other short stories for purposes of assessing my particular range of talents, please email me on [asrosie@iprimus.com.au](mailto:asrosie@iprimus.com.au)

# THE ACTING BUG

Published in *The Box*  
Edition #4 1998

I'm lying on the floor trying hard not to look foolish as a woman's voice calls out. "Okay I want you to pretend you're all fish and the pond you're in is emptying... feel the life leaving your body." I screw up my face in concentration as from outside the door I hear the sounds of the local swimming club going through their routines. I'm up on the second floor of the Box Hill Aquatic Centre, surely if I was a fish out of water I could just throw myself into the pool?

Michele continues to talk us through the last dying motions of a fish as I roll my head to stare at the young woman beside me. She is gulping for breath, her body quivers and twitches and her arms flail helplessly. I manage a grimace, feel the muscles in my body tense, and then I relax as I take my last breath.

Such was my introduction to drama school.

I had contacted 'Drama with a Difference,' midway through '96. I had grown tired of my job as a cleaner, put my budding career as a writer on hold, and enrolled in acting classes. Having memorised my acceptance speech for my Oscar Award, I set off for the bright lights of showbiz.

What I found however when I stepped into the rented studio, was not a chain smoking, hyperactive director or instructor, but a young woman in her early thirties who welcomed me with a smile and a handshake. Michele Williams, a graduate of NCSA, (a leading US drama school) has been running her school for over five years and in that time has seen numerous students go through her classes. Over a six-month period, she guided the half dozen students, (myself included) from a rented studio, to the 'bright lights' of the Polyglot theatre in Prahran.

The thought of performing in front of a live audience terrified all of us, but Michele was quick to reassure us that, "performing in front of a live audience is the closest you will come to a near death experience."

With that 'comforting' thought in mind, we set off for Broadway, 'Prahran' style. The stage was pitch black and the audience barely visible. We sat on steps next to a side door; I smoked three cigarettes in fifteen minutes before my act, waiting calmly with sweating palms for my big debut.

The big moment came in what seemed like the blink of an eye; the gun by the way refused to go off, in spite of extensive trials before the show. I guess cap guns aren't what they were in my day. By the time I stepped onto the stage for my second act a half hour later, I was a veteran of the stage, a virtuoso of stage and screen, no matter that I fluffed my lines.

The elation we felt at surviving our ordeal can only be likened to the emotions experienced by the survivors of a shipwreck, sheer ecstasy. I hadn't won an Oscar or a Logie, but I had managed to give a performance in front of total strangers. We were not professional actors; we were ordinary people doing ordinary jobs who had just performed extraordinary feats.

Acting classes may seem beyond the reach of most people but according to David Armstrong of the 'Academy of Television,' who hosts 'Armstrong Live' on Optus, "the range of students is as diverse as the rest of the world." In the classes run by both 'Drama with a Difference,' and the 'Academy of Television,' I found people from all walks of life, homemakers, laborers, students and a Police Instructor. The classes run by the Academy have well known personalities such as Ken James, John Woods, Alan Fletcher, and Jan Russ, (casting director from Neighbours) as lecturers; Lisa McCune has also taken classes there. However, before you book a class at one of the many drama schools in Melbourne, take a few words of advice from an 'old hand' at the game.

- Don't expect that an Oscar or a gold Logie awaits you at the completion of your course. These kinds of awards come once in a lifetime to a handful of performers, one probably has more chance of being struck by lightning.
- Be relaxed, you'll perform some outrageously silly stunts and feel like a fish out of water, but everyone else in the room is feeling just as embarrassed as you are. The mere act of bursting into song when prompted by a teacher takes away the self-consciousness many of us feel.
- Enjoy yourself, you're there not just to learn, but to meet other people with similar goals and ambitions. Acting classes provide a satisfying and healthy social outlet, without the hangovers suffered after a night at a club.
- Take only yourself to the class, not some personality you've invented to impress your tutors. Nobody is going to laugh if you stammer your way through your lines or worse still, forget your lines. Your tutors are trained actors who know only too well the trauma one goes through before a performance.
- And as for me? Well I've forsaken my budding acting career for the moment, (I believe the correct term is 'putting your career on hold') and am concentrating on writing. Although I must confess, I have a slight twinge whenever performers have to endure the scathing attentions of critics. I know how they feel.

Written by Alastair Rosie 13/04/98

NB: Drama with a Difference can be contacted on 9894 3830.

The Academy of Television can be contacted on 9532 8006.

## AYSHA'S STORY:

*Published in Collectively Unconscious 1997*

Listen well, oh Earth woman, listen to the words of the ancient ones, whose names were called blessed amongst the gods. Aye, you did not think the gods had any life apart from what your ancestors gave them. I pity your race for its disbelief and departure from the old ways. You have forsaken the one true path and gone your own way, neither knowing from whence you came, or to where you are going. Since I have risen from the sleep that is called death, I have walked amongst your people here on Kirshwin. You humans, are they the ones they call 'the colonists?' I have observed your petty jealousies and bigotry.

You call us barbarians and treat us like errant children, because of what you have judged from the outside. Was it not one of your gods who told you to judge not and you would not be judged? How is it that you have the right to cast us to hell? The hell you yourselves live in is far worse than anything I have yet seen in this world.

*But we have traveled so far across the cosmic deserts, how can we be so pitiful?*

It is for this reason that I pity your people; you have the technology to travel to the ends of the universe, but you have not the power to love one another. It is this that will extinguish your noble race for I have seen your world lying in ruins. Aye, and I saw you when your bones were not yet formed in your mother's womb.

*Does my mother still live?*

Listen to me child of Earth. You who has admired the simple ways of the Kirshwinians, who has revelled in the glory of the hunt; learn from our history that you may save not only your own people but ours also.

*It is too late to change now all is lost!*

Heed my words, oh daughter of Earth. It is to you that I speak these words. You are the giver of life. It was by your hand that I was raised from death. You pierced my heart with the sword of Aysha, my sword, as I lay entombed beneath the ice. And yet you say that the dead cannot rise. Oh daughter of Earth, who has the power to bring forth life from within her own body, can you not listen to my voice?

*I am listening, though as yet I do not understand.*

I do not condemn your noble race lightly, we were once as you but we fell from grace, and we are as you see us now; barbarians and savages. It was not always so.

I am Aysha the Jenowan, born of the holy union of Krann, the Vanak god of war and Yaindee, a Jenowan princess. It is said that my father looked upon my mother and was so struck by her beauty, that he laid down his holy sword at her feet. It was then that I was conceived, he planted his seed within her that the Kirshwinians might praise the gods and so be saved.

The Vanaks were a mighty nation before that time. A noble people who were feared in war and respected in peace, they were the guardians of the realm and no invader, whether from foreign lands or starry heavens, would dare defile the shores of Kirsha whilst they reigned.

But when I was born all that came to an end.

*Did they quarrel amongst themselves?*

Ah, so you know the story! Aye, they did fall out amongst themselves. The royal household of the Vanaks was split in three, between the houses of, Valkania, Varghannia and Vannazzia. All wanted to wear the crown after the death of Gahntaki the Great. They warred mightily against one another and laid waste to the nations around about them. The nations cried out for a saviour to help them but none was to be found.

*We know of saviours on Earth.*

Aye, that you do my daughter. And in much the same way my father, Krann, called me. It was only I who could lead the least of the Vanaks, the Jenowans in revolt. The Vanaks would not listen to the gods or to their peers, so it was deemed that a lesser class would revolt against them.

I refused at first for I was not worthy of the call. I was ignorant of my royal birth, till Krann took me to the heights of heaven and revealed my birthright to me. My mother was a Valkanian princess who had been deposed by the House of Dannywhore, and sold as a child to the Jenowans. It was she who was to wear the throne of the Vanaks. My father showed me many things in the vision, the beginnings of time and the end of the Ages. I saw your birth, aye, and the dawn of your world, which was not yet come.

*You saw the beginning of life on Earth?*

I saw all my child, but hush, heed my words. I accepted the calling and led the House of Jenowa in revolt against the Vanaks. It was a terrible war with no respite for either side. We were twice defeated on the ice deserts of Helkewa and would have perished, but for the Ice Lords who came to our aid. Half man and half beast, they drove the Varghannians and Vannazzians from our flanks. With the aid of the Valkanians, who saw the justice of our cause and made peace with Jenowa, we were able to survive the winter in Valkania. That was when the tide, which had ebbed against the Jenowans for so long, turned in our favour, for the Kings of Valkania allied themselves to Jenowa.

T'was in the summer of the following year that I led my armies to the Plains of Gannyweir; there we defeated the armies of Varghannia and Vannazzia. It was a terrible battle, so many died that the valleys ran deep with blood, and the spirits of the air fed on the flesh of the dying. I wept for those who had died that day though we were bitter enemies. I rent my garments in sorrow and seeing my distress, the great armies sued for peace.

*We too have fought great battles and filled the valleys with blood.*

Aye, I have seen your wars you are a bloodthirsty race, quick to tread the path to war and slow to make peace.

I was crowned Queen of all Vanakia in the capital at Orshwinna and we entered into an age of peace; such as had not been seen even under Quewere the Beautiful, who was the greatest of the Vanaks to rule over us.

But it was all to end.

Madnir, the bastard son of Zantaki, Lord of Dannywhore, sought the black wisdom of Baltaki, the Black god of the underworld. It was he who knew my weakness, I was born with a fatal flaw and it was my only weakness. No weapon could pierce me save for one fashioned from Klingite. It was only I who wielded the Klingite sword. Madnir raided the mines of Jenowa and hammered out the blade under the instruction of Baltaki. Evil curses uttered at the beginning of time were etched into its shining blade. The spells so horrible, that not even my father Krann could stand against them, the gods trembled with fear when the blade came forth. It was the only weapon capable of killing the gods, and were it not for their terror I would have been warned of Madnir's intent.

*So you were taken unawares?*

That I was, oh daughter of Earth. He surprised me in the night and slaughtered my hounds, the same beasts you see resurrected along with my twelve warrior maidens. It was a terrible fight but I was overcome in the end, I was bound hand and foot and brought me to Orshwinna.

*Were you also subjected to the mockery of a false trial?*

That I was, the trial was held in the dead of night, when Baltaki's power is at its greatest. I was condemned to death; the sentence was to be carried out at dawn as the sun rose. Madnir wanted me to see my last sunrise before my life was taken from me.

And so I was led to the battlements that next morning to witness my last sunrise, 'ere the sun set on my life forever. The gods gathered in force before the gates of Orshwinna and would have stormed the walls; had I but held out my hand. For though they were afraid of Baltaki's power, they could not bear to see a child of their flesh so cruelly treated, and so unjustly condemned. At any moment in that fateful hour I could have called down heavens' entire wrath but I refused. The inhabitants of this world would not have been spared, and as much as I desired life, I could not bear to see this world destroyed on my behalf.

*That is what we call noble, but why did you not bring down fire from heaven?*

Noble? Hah! That is not what we call nobility. I was in possession of a far greater secret, a magic deeper than even that of Baltaki's. Not even Tanda, the High god whose power cannot be measured, knew of the magic from before the dawn of time. The one, who we know as, 'He, who was and is and is to come,' had uttered the magic when I received my calling. It was what Baltaki desired from my lips that night, 'ere he could rise from his depths and usurp the throne of the 'Most High.' But I remained silent though he promised to make me Queen at his side. And so I was hanged from the heights of Orshwinna.

*Hanged?*

Aye, I spoke the magic and uttered the prophecy. 'That one not yet born and not of this world will come to awaken me from sleep. Then shall the grand design be unveiled for all to see. The hope of all the ages, death's bonds cannot hold me forever.'

*And so you were entombed.*

You speak the truth my daughter. I lay cold and alone though my spirit lived and moved through this world and worlds yet unborn, but I could not enter into life. Many tried to awaken me from sleep. For the ancient incantation called them forth to seek the prize that was mine, and mine alone to give. That he who pierced my heart would raise me to life. Many tried but my heart was hidden from them and they were burned in the fires of Aysha. Countless brave warriors throughout this universe traveled to take me from my bed, but one by one they were all destroyed.

*Until I came along.*

Aye, you were the first of the female kind to walk through the fires of Aysha and live. You alone discerned that the heart of the woman is the womb, the place from where all life begins its journey from the womb to the tomb.

*What am I to do now?*

You are to take this message to the people of this world and of your world, that life has come to this world; it is life such as they have never known. They are to seek out the legends of the Old Ones, the gods, goddesses and spirits they once scorned in the name of what you call 'science.' They must return to the land 'ere it turns against them and give to

the gods the fruit of the fields. Only then will the ancient curse be lifted and your people and mine will know a new peace and harmony.

They will turn against you and bring armies to your throat, but do not fear you will not suffer the same fate as I. The valleys will be filled with blood and you will weep for the destruction you have wrought upon this world. Your tears must also flow, for it is only in mourning that joy and peace are born. The fruit of your loins will be the beginning of the end of this age, and the dawn of the new age. Your children are your hope, as they are our hope. It is in the renewal of life brought forth from the womb, that we advance to the place of eternal bliss.

Hear my words, oh daughter of Earth and keep them close to your heart, set a guard with a thousand eyes to watch over your womb; for just as it is your heart, so also it is mine...

Written by Alastair Rosie ©. September. 1997.

## LUCKY YOU'RE WITH...

Published in *The Box*.

Edition #3 1998

It seemed simple enough at the time. A simple oil change on a truck. I was a lube operator at a new and used car dealers. I had for many years desired to be a motor mechanic and so, at the age of twenty eight, applied to a dealership for the position of TA (tradesman's assistant). I prided myself on my mechanical abilities and was quite often found under a friend's car most weekends.

The used car world is notorious for shonky business practices and this particular dealership was no exception. There was a saying going around the pits in those days. "Whack them in, whack them out and wipe them." This meant less work for overworked mechanics and more time for the important things in life, like running outside every time a lady walked past the garage.

Doing a good job meant doing as little as possible and not getting caught by the customer. "Thou shalt not get caught," is the first rule of business in the world of the used car dealer.

Anyway, this particular day I was scheduled to change the oil on a light truck. I use the 'light' guardedly, it had a sixteen-foot tray and I was engaged in major surgery for half an hour just trying to fit it into the lube bay. Being new on the job, I'd been exiled to a separate lube bay away from the main bays. This suited me fine as I could get on with the job without being interrupted, although I was closer to the clicking heels of adventurous women.

It took some time to fit this truck into the bay and as I looked at the clock I realised that I would not finish the job before the magic hour of 5.00pm. this was not a great problem to me however; I would just drain the oil, put in new oil, lock up the bay and leave.

With this in mind I backed the truck out and rolled under it on a creeper. I had forgotten one 'minor' detail however, the handbrake.

You know that lever inside the vehicle that prevents it from rolling backwards down a ninety degree incline? I had left it off in my haste to finish the job before knock off time. To make matters worse, I was already on a slight angle and as I drained the last the oil, I reached up and grabbed the cross member, hauled myself forward. I must have been stronger than I realised, although maybe the slight incline worked in my favour.

The truck was not there when I sat up and when I turned around to look for it, there it was, sailing effortlessly across the road towards the spare parts window. For a moment I was frozen with horror, this couldn't be, hadn't I left the handbrake on?

Being a 'man of action,' I leaped to my feet and raced across the road just as the truck hit the window. The plate glass was no match for four tons of runaway steel, neither was the brickwork or spouting. The truck literally bounced off the wall, amid the carnage of what had been the spare parts shop. I seem to recall the words of an advertising jingle for AAMI running through my head at that point in time. Funny how the most horrifying incidents can bring out the comedian in me.

The woman who had been standing at the counter a few seconds before had turned the same shade as her shirt but whiter. There I was, with a truck bouncing off the window and coming back for a second try, as if once wasn't enough to make a complete idiot out of me.

This time however, 'action man' was ready and leaping into the truck, I managed to start it and drive the vehicle back into the bay. I dismounted from my trusty steed and surveyed the damage.

The spare parts shop was looking decidedly the worse for wear. Divine retribution for overcharging the customer all these years? The manager didn't think so unfortunately and failed to see the humour in the situation. I spent the night going over the incident over a beer or two dozen, trying to undo the damage.

My reputation was to follow me a few days later when I 'forgot' to check the wheel nuts on a Laser before we took it for a test drive. The vibrations from the left-hand front caused the mechanic driving the car the pull over and check the wheels.

A few days later, it was official; I was no longer in the employ of the dealership. In that time, one mechanic had written off a customer's car whilst taking it for a test drive.

The fact that he was doing a Peter Brock impersonation at the time was overlooked. I left the dealership a little wiser than I went in. the amount of 'mistakes' I'd witnessed in that time made an episode of 'The Three Stooges,' look relatively bland in comparison.

The incident with the truck could have had tragic consequences I must admit, but as I sit at the computer dreaming up new plots and different ways of saying things I remember the lube bay and manage a slight grin.

"Lucky your car isn't being fixed by yours truly."

Written by Alastair Rosie

Alastair Rosie

# OUTSOURCING YOUR RESOURCES

Published in *Herald Sun* (along with *Hints2.doc*)  
February 16 1999

So you've finally decided to take the plunge. You may have sneered at the trivialities of the World Wide Web (WWW). On the other hand, you may have marveled at the technological advancements. Either way, you have dipped your toes in the ocean of cyberspace or immersed yourself in the new education. So how do you set up home pages for your school/subject?

Home pages are just that: they are your home. Nobody enters your home via the bedroom; usually there is a front entrance with a welcome mat out the front. Your main page should contain all the relevant information about who you are, what you offer and more importantly, where and how to find it. The appearance of the home page should be aesthetically pleasing.

Following the analogy of decorating an empty house, prioritise your pages. Your Science department may be innovative but will be of little interest to someone in arts/english. A simple graphic image with your main menu is easily constructed and user friendly. Your award winning departments and/or students can be covered under a 'showcase/special interest' link.

Bear in mind that there must be some sort of logic to your pages, even if you are into experimental 'cyberwriting.' Think of a set of pages as being a series of levels. There is the main page or top level, followed by another level leading to different faculties or subjects. Finally, there are individual pages created by teachers and students. This last level can be as creative and innovative as your imagination allows.

There is ample room for innovative and exciting pages on the net and the degree to which your institution utilises the latest technology will go a long way to attracting students. Examples of students' work on your site can involve not only your students, but also the public in the life of your school. Links to industry and other commercial sites can expose your students to exciting avenues for the future.

Effective and well-constructed home pages are already an extremely cost effective way of promoting your school. With the Internet fast becoming a byword for sleaze and triviality; schools are presented with an opportunity to service both the wider community and enhance their curriculum.

Written By Alastair Rosie  
Word Count 370

## **BREAKOUT FOR SAME ARTICLE**

- Pay attention to colour coordination; large blocks of white text on a black background are an eyesore.
- Check your outside links for suitability and download time. If a page will take a while to download, warn your visitors first; it's considered polite.
- Avoid lengthy pages of text unless they have hyperlinked contents at the top. In

other words, divide your page into sections so that people can select without having to scroll down the entire page.

- Check the file size of images on the page. A photograph or other graphic image can take a while to download and your visitors will be kept waiting; anything over 50KB is becoming unwieldy.
- Always check your own internal links for accuracy. Give people a link that will take them back to where they started.
- Analyse and adjust to your particular market or audience. A bit of market research will tell you who is likely to visit your page. You are advertising your school or department, be attentive to the needs of others.
- Avoid the use of plug ins on the main page. A plug in can take twenty minutes to download and install. Sometimes the computer has to be restarted to initialize the software.

Written by Alastair Rosie  
Alastair Rosie

## CHANGES TO PRIVATE HEALTH COVER

Health for the young has always been accepted as the norm regardless of the number of physically challenged people in the community. Youth often carries with it a certain innate arrogance as we set about making our mark on the brave new world in front of us.

Issues like car insurance seem obvious to us, home contents? Let's face it, who wants to lose that nice new Pentium? But when it comes to other types of insurance such as; health and dare I say it, life insurance *I'm not dying am I?*; we come unstuck and start reaching for the latest copy of *Beat*. After all, who wants to think about getting sick, let alone dying? There's too much to do out there, and we have public health cover so why bother forking out hard earned cash to fill the coffers of the private insurance companies. It's not as though we don't like private cover, it's just that well, maybe after I've graduated and gotten that high paying job I've been working towards.

Unfortunately however, the old adage of 'never put off tomorrow what you can do today' has come to apply even more strongly to private health benefits than ever before. For those students like yours truly who have either reached the dreaded thirty something or are umm□past it; the cost of health insurance is set to skyrocket as we get older.

Recent changes announced during the 1999 Federal Budget mean that the cost of obtaining private health cover rises by 2% each year until you reach the grand old age of 65 and then it's back to the good old days—plus forty years worth of price increases.

Let's hope we don't get sick enough to need it.

The expected increases don't actually apply until July 2000 and the rise has been capped at 70%. For couples who are both above the thirty something mark, the rise is split. For instance, if one partner is aged thirty and the other forty, the loading would be 10% and not 20%, based on a joining age of 35.

The reasons for the sudden price hike are obvious to most people. With the drop off rate over the last few years, private insurers have seen the writing on the wall and reacted in typical knee jerk style, forcing people to choose private health cover before it becomes too expensive. The following excerpt from the fact sheet sent out by Medibank Private illustrates this point all too well.

*'Lifetime Health Cover is designed to minimise future health insurance premium increases by boosting membership numbers, helping to balance the age distribution of fund members and deterring hit and runs' - a term which describes people who take out health insurance cover for a particular, often very expensive, procedure, then drop their cover.'*

The changes reflect what has been a continual scenario for many years in this country, the 'rights' of those in authority to punish the majority for the 'sins' of a minority. The legislation is blatantly discriminatory and affects students who are struggling on income support and cannot afford the basic cost of private health cover, let alone cope with a 2% rise for the 'crime' of growing older. A simpler and fairer solution to the problem would be to have dropped the cost of joining in order to attract paying customers. This is in spite of the fact that the government has recently bailed out the private health industry to the tune of 5 billion dollars. One would wonder why the government would shell out this amount of money and ask for nothing in return. The cost of propping up what has been a troubled industry for years is merely passed onto the ever faithful consumer.

For those who are interested in getting in before July 2000 here are the basic figures for the base cover as offered by the big insurers.

Medibank offers first choice hospital cover at \$12.58 per week (\$654.16 p/a) This covers you for hospital accommodation, intensive care, theatre fees (including dental work), same day accommodation and treatment as well as CPAP appliances. Nevertheless, it pays lower benefits for such things as: in- hospital psychiatric or rehabilitation treatment, cardio-thoracic procedures, major eye surgery, hip and knee joint replacement, all pregnancy and birth related services, assisted reproductive services (IVF, GIFT) plastic, reconstructive and cosmetic surgery. Basic hospital cover under HBA will cost \$14.25 a week (\$741 p/a) and covers you for: private/shared accommodation, same day care in hospitals, operating theatre, intensive care and labour ward fees, general hospital fees, ambulance cover, surgically inserted prostheses, home nursing. However at non participating hospitals you will incur out of pocket expenses. A \$300 excess applies to each hospital visit (up to three visits p/a).

If you decide to bite the bullet and go for private health cover shop around and read the fine print, as the accompanying tables will only give basic information. i.e. avoid judging a health benefits table by brightly coloured tables and advertising jargon. More tips can be found on the Australian Consumer Association's website at <http://www.choice.com.au> and follow the links to health. The Private Health Insurance Ombudsman's site is also an eye opener and their annual report detailing complaints lodged against private insurance companies is available for download in PDF format. The site can be found at <http://www.phicc.org.au/> I recommend both these site for those who wish to research the matter further before laying out their savings.

One small benefit to come out this benefit war is the fact that those with cover can drop their existing cover for 24 months without having to suffer the indignities of being judged by their age. For those well below the thirty y/o cut off mark, take note and don't leave adequate cover until it's too late.

Written by Alastair Rosie

Words: 967

Alastair Rosie

21/07/98

# HAIRSPRAY, SPIDERS AND REDEMPTION

Accepted by Boxplanet (March 2000)

He was big, brown and hairy. His gangly legs grasped the wall and his enormous fangs seemed to grow bigger with every passing minute. Something had to be done and as usual, I was the unanimously elected hero. I'm not in favour of facing up to man/woman eating huntsmans; I'm an arachnophobe, it's just that I'm the only one left. My brother is over six-foot and afraid of nothing, but in the face of a huntsman, he disappears to his ex girlfriend's place—presumably to hide in the centre of a bare walled room.

I'm a master spider killer; I've used all kinds of methods. I've drowned them, splattered them and sprayed them with all kinds of concoctions—fly spray is ineffective.

The last thing to go through one unfortunate beastie's head was the Word of the Lord (my mother's bible). It's a shady business however, on a par with drug dealing and arms selling. Fifteen years ago whenever I sent a beastie to spider heaven, women were lauding me as a successor to James Bond—now I'm the commander in chief of the East Timorese militia—how times change.

Getting back to our favourite little predator, yes that's what they are. My mother still wanted him out of the house, preferably alive, which is like comparing a surgical strike to three weeks of carpet bombing, effective but not as spectacular. Nevertheless, I resorted to try a technique that one of her girlfriends swears by, hairspray. Apparently it's supposed to stiffen them up and they fall into your waiting dustpan.

He seemed mildly amused that I'd decided to pretty him up. After all, it must be tough having hair all over your body. If spiders were as big as us, hair salons would never go broke. This spider merely danced away so I tried again, a full blast at point blank range. That upset him and he headed for the ceiling but now I was in full flight. I handled that can of *Sunsilk* like an assault rifle, firing staccato bursts willy nilly, and soon he was scampering down the wall. But I was too quick and hammered him again; the air was swelling very sweet and we were both getting high.

However something *was* happening to our furry friend; he *was* beginning to stiffen up. One leg stuck to the wall and he dragged it slowly towards him. Encouraged, I blasted him again and again, resisting the urge to play kersplat! He fell down onto the sideboard and then tumbled down the back and out of sight. I eventually found him scrunched up in a little ball. His brown fur was now peroxide white and he must have smelled beautiful.

He looked up at me pleadingly as I blasted him again and prepared to launch my final blitzkrieg. But something shifted inside me. Maybe it's all those years of relentlessly stalking them, although I must admit I had a lump in my throat when I saw *Titanic*. He looked almost pitiful waiting for my size nine boot. I bent down tenderly, swept him gently into a dustpan, and deposited him outside—proving that redemption does come to spider hunters and spiders alike. I found him a few minutes later, still covered in hairspray trying to crawl up the wall. I knocked him off the wall and back into the rain.

And the moral? Spider hunters can change but only momentarily, the next eight legged, beady eyed, spawn of Satan to set foot in my house gets the oven cleaner treatment and a size nine boot on its back; it took a lot of hairspray and patience.

Written by Alastair Rosie 27/01/2000

# TWILIGHT

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Twilight is perhaps an appropriate name for this lack lustre movie starring Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon and Gene Hackman. Directed by Robert Benton and produced by Paramount/Scott Rudin Productions; it remains at best, a movie that heralds the end of the crime/psycho thriller genre and at worst, a pale imitation of such movies as Heat and City Hall. In defence of the movie I must admit that had it been made six years ago, it would have stood a chance of making it in the real world.

The story revolves around retired cop cum private eye who has a booze problem in the great tradition of American private eyes. Harry Ross (Paul Newman) has sworn off the booze and is trying to go straight in his role as minder and messenger boy for Jack and Catherine Ames (Gene Hackman and Susan Sarandon).

With such a top heavy cast it is surprising that more effort was not put into the plot which remains dismal at its best. The narrator's voice attempts to guide us through the various machinations of the plot as it unwinds. I found the only highlight was the relationship between Harry and Catherine. It was doomed from the start which was predictable enough.

The plot has overtones of another crime thriller, Chinatown. Its portrayal of crime and corruption was similar, as was the notion that those with enough money can get away with murder. The murder of Catherine's ex-husband which had been put down to suicide serves as the plot hook, while Hollywood serves as the backdrop for this cesspool of corruption, no surprises there either. A bit like portraying action heroes as ex navy SEALs with fourteen black belts to their credit.

Go and see Twilight if you can be bothered sitting through it, if not for the plot, but then for the tired crime story formula. Isn't it time that Hollywood and filmmakers in general started looking for fresh new ways of retelling crime stories? And isn't it about time scriptwriters started taking their characters seriously instead of looking towards the inevitable box office receipts?

Here's to the long-awaited dawn of a new era of crime stories.

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